

Section 7 - Analysis of Needs

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The 1988-1992 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provides an inventory of recreation facilities by region, as well as listing the major recreational issues present within each region. Hanover is located within the Southeast region of the State. The following high-priority issues identified in the SCORP for this region are consistent with Hanover's needs: development and expansion of recreation facilities; maintenance of recreational facilities; acquisition and protection of water supply areas; acquisition and protection of recreation areas; and acquisition and protection of conservation areas. Each of these above-mentioned issues is an issue in Hanover, therefore it is obvious that other towns in this region of the State are facing similar concerns as Hanover.

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The Open Space survey distributed to a random sample of Hanover residents indicated that the Town should prioritize the identification, protection and enhancement of the quality of Hanover's surface and groundwater for municipal drinking water supply, wildlife and recreational uses. Specifically, 59% of the survey respondents "strongly agreed" that Hanover should be more active in the protection of its groundwater supply and surface water. Additionally, 42% of the respondents "strongly agreed" that the Town should be more active in the monitoring of pollution from septic tanks. The primary concerns identified in the survey are as follows (1 represents the highest concern):

1. Over-development/commercialization/housing growth
2. Pollution of groundwater due to septic systems
3. Protection of and accessibility to Town's water resources
4. Increase open space and create a greenbelt linking open spaces

Pollution of surface and/or groundwater would not only threaten Hanover's drinking water, but our recreational resources as well. Further, unplanned development threatens the rural character of the Town which so many residents appreciate. Control of water pollution has been expressed as a critical need in all local planning efforts including the 1994 Community Action Statement. These concerns are valid given continued development in Town, a lack of sewers and the Town's reliance on its groundwater for its municipal water supply.

The Open Space Plan Survey showed that 67% of the respondents believe that 15% - 25% of Hanover's total land area should be permanently protected as open space. Presently the Town has approximately 10.4% percent of its land area permanently protected from development. Sixty-five

percent of the survey respondents either “strongly agreed”(40%) or “agreed” (25%) that Hanover should set aside funds to preserve open space and conservation lands. Further, a survey distributed in late 1995 as part of the Comprehensive Plan process showed that 83% of the respondents felt that Hanover should have additional open space and recreational facilities. Of the respondents wanting more open space and recreational facilities, 74% would be willing to have the Town use tax dollars to acquire these additional facilities.

Control of water pollution has been expressed as a critical need in all local planning efforts including the 1994 Community Action Statement. Where possible the Town should acquire conservation easements or fee interest in land surrounding public water supply wells.

In addition to its groundwater resources, Hanover also has numerous surface water bodies and many streams and brooks. These waterbodies provide habitat, aesthetic value, and recreation opportunities in Hanover. Almost 20% of Hanover’s terrain is comprised of water bodies and water-related land forms. Since surface water quality relates to the quality of groundwater, aesthetics/Town character, recreational opportunities and quality of life, protection of these resources should also be of paramount concern to the Town.

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Another resource, although less tangible in nature than water resources, is the small town and semi-rural character of Hanover. Conventional residential and commercial growth threatens the community character that is central to the atmosphere of the Town. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents to the Open Space survey felt that Hanover’s rate of growth has been “somewhat too fast” (42%) or “much too fast” (25%). More recently, the Comprehensive Plan Survey has revealed that 58% of the respondents believe that residential growth has been “too fast” with 41% responding that residential growth has been “about right”. This more recent survey also listed residential growth and its effects as the third most serious issue facing Hanover today. Additionally, 50% of the Comprehensive Plan survey respondents believe that commercial growth has been too rapid. The primary concerns with regard to commercial development are traffic and encroachment on residential areas.

Given such strong feelings by a majority of Hanover residents, efforts should be made to retain and enhance the Town’s semi-rural, small town character by maintaining and increasing open space areas, preserving scenic landscapes and protecting wildlife habitats.

Unplanned residential and commercial growth is threatening the semi-rural small town atmosphere that Hanover residents treasure. Additionally, this growth has placed a strain on all Town services. While growth is inevitable, this growth should be well planned and should enhance community character.

B. Summary of Community's Needs

The Open Space Survey focused considerably on attitudes toward recreational facilities in Town. The activities most frequently enjoyed by survey respondents, as well as the facilities/activities in need of improvement are listed below:

Figure 7-1: Summary of Recreational Activities and Needs	
Activities Most Frequently Enjoyed Hanover Residents	Types of Facilities in Greatest Need of Addition, Improvement or Expansion
1. Walking	1. Sidewalks
2. Biking	2. Bike paths
3. Fishing	3. Protected open space
4. Swimming	4. Swimming pools/instruction
5. Golf	5. Golf courses

Source: 1995 Open Space Survey

Note the direct correlation between frequent activities and need for improvement. Another issue raised during the Open Space public forum was the need for a teen/community center. Many residents are concerned that teenagers do not have a place to “hang out”. Rather, the youths tend to congregate in the woods or other non-supervised areas. Additionally, the possibility of establishing community gardens or neighborhood “pocket parks” was also raised at the public forum. A pocket park is a small park located within a neighborhood, designed to meet the needs of the neighborhood’s residents. Frequently these parks contain only a few benches or perhaps a tot lot. These parks are very effective in establishing a sense of community with neighborhood areas.

With regard to specific Town-owned recreational facilities, the following facilities were identified as those most in need of expansion or repair:

Figure 7-2: Specific Facilities In Greatest Need For Expansion Or Repair
1. HHS Track
2. HMS Soccer
3. Sylvester Tennis (tie) HMS Baseball
4. Myrtle Field Tennis
5. Indian Head Drive Canoe Launch

Source: 1995 Open Space Survey

A majority of the respondents did not support the use of new taxes to provide or upgrade recreational facilities. However, 68% did indicate a willingness to pay a user fee; 77% would be willing to raise money to fund upgrades; and 100% supported the use of other sources, such as gifts, tax deductions or government funding for upgrades.

Luddam's Ford, Tindale Bog, Indian Head Drive canoe launch and Phillips Bird Sanctuary are four of the more well-known Town-owned open space areas. However, only 28% of the respondents indicated that they currently utilize Luddam's Ford; 15% Tindale Bog; 19% Indian Head Drive canoe launch; and 15% Phillips Bird Sanctuary. The Town should determine why these usage numbers are so low to ensure that residents are aware of the recreational opportunities available in Town. Additionally, the Town should ensure that all residents, regardless of physical disabilities are able to utilize some of these resources. A majority of the participants in the Open Space public forum indicated that the North and Indian Head Rivers are fairly accessible, while the Drinkwater River, Third Herring Brook and Indian Head canoe launch are not accessible enough.

Based on the 1995 Open Space Survey, the following needs were identified. The percentages indicated represent respondents who checked either "strongly agree" or "agree".

- Conservation lands should more accessible to its residents for passive recreation. 66%
- A "greenway" plan should be formulated and implemented to link open space areas 68%
- Town money should be used to purchase parcels formerly under Chapter 61 of the Forest Protection Act 72%
- The Town should explore options for keeping private non-developed lands in their natural state 68%
- The Town should set aside funds to preserve open space and conservation land 65%
- Hanover should establish a land trust to facilitate the acquisition and holding of undeveloped properties 54%

Section 9 recommends responsible parties and a timeframe for implementation of these and other issues as part of the Action Plan.

Additionally, although the Town has a significant amount of protected open space, many Town residents are not aware of where this open space is located, how to gain access or what type of amenities (i.e., trails, playing fields, etc.) these areas have to offer. In 1989, the Conservation Commission published a Conservation Map showing all conservation land in Town, with written descriptions of each. The Town should consider updating this map, and providing additional information handicap accessibility. Further, efforts should be made by the Town to ensure there is adequate access to recreation and conservation facilities for the handicapped and elderly population.

Many Town residents may not be aware of where this open space is located, how to gain access or what type of amenities or facilities are available. Effort must be given to inform Town residents of the publicly accessible land and its value for recreation, habitat value, or natural resource protection.

Cultural activities are also considered a form of recreation as they often relate to the natural environment and overall quality of life. Hanover has a wealth of talented and dedicated people, including artists, musicians and performers. Cultural activities include programs and events sponsored by civic, religious or educational organizations.

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the most recent Comprehensive Plan survey respondents indicated they would support the Town acquiring land for recreational/open space purposes. Seventy-one percent felt the Town should utilize tax dollars to acquire open space. Therefore, given this support, the Town should continue funding the conservation land acquisition account to ensure that the Town has the money necessary to purchase key pieces of land as they become available.

Of particular interest to the Open Space and Recreation Plan is the connection of existing protected land within Hanover and linking Town open spaces and/or trails to other regional open space systems. These connections will provide a contiguous system of open space which in the future could contain a linked network of trails throughout the region, maintaining wildlife corridors and supporting the semi-rural suburban character of Hanover.

Frequent communication between the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Assessor's and Treasurer's offices should be encouraged to ensure that appropriate Town officials are notified in a timely fashion when tax title land, lands taxed under Chapter 61, 61A or 61B or farmlands are available for purchase. Once a communication network between the appropriate Town boards and committees is established, the Town should develop a review process and standardized criteria to be used in evaluating whether the Town should purchase land as it becomes available. As the Town cannot purchase all properties put up for sale, there should be a formal process to guide the decision making.

Specifically, a ranking system should be established to identify key factors in open space protection. In order to evaluate the land, the Town should ask, at a minimum, the following questions:

"Is the land . . .

1. In the vicinity or contiguous to other Conservation Commission/open space land?
2. Important to water supply protection?
3. A significant wildlife habitat or home to a unique natural resource?
4. Farmland that would be developed unless protected?
5. Home to significant scenic landscapes or vistas?
6. A potential location for active recreational facilities?
7. A potential location for passive recreational facilities?"

In addition to purchasing land for open space and/or recreational use, the Planning Board should develop an Open Space/Cluster Zoning By-law and encourage developers of residential subdivisions to utilize it. This type of regulation will allow a developer to cluster homes in a smaller area, while preserving significant areas of open space. Further, the Town should establish a community

education and outreach program to educate residents on conservation easements, restrictions and other techniques for land conservation. These techniques, combined with an aggressive land acquisition program, will allow the Town to maintain and improve the small-town, semi-rural character and quality of life in Hanover.

While many practices and regulations are in place, Town boards and commissions need to establish a clear and simple process for rating the value of potential open space land that may be at risk. The seven questions above should be incorporated into a Rating Matrix which would include critical facts and the analysis of the property's value. In addition, more desirable approaches to development such as clustering residences adjacent to a dedicated open space area should be allowed and promoted to be consistent with the goal of managed growth.

D. General Action Plan Concepts

Some general concepts for implementation actions which respond to Hanover's goals and needs follow:

- ⇒ *Existing open space lands should be linked where possible to a larger local or regional greenbelt.*
- ⇒ *A continuous corridor of protected land along the Indian Head and Drinkwater Rivers should be established.*
- ⇒ *Potential well sites should continue to be identified, and land surrounding these areas should be protected from development.*
- ⇒ *Explore the possibility of utilizing the Massachusetts Electric right-of-way to provide a corridor of recreation opportunity and access.*

While Hanover is rich with water resources, focus should be on protecting the quality of this resource. It is critical to take a regional perspective to protection of public drinking water supplies since groundwater does not adhere to political boundaries. Where possible, additional land should be protected around drinking water supply wells as a buffer to potential contamination. Additionally, the Town should ensure that neighboring towns are also protecting Hanover's water supply, while offering the same mutual protection to these towns.

Access to public lands is critical for the enjoyment and appreciation of open space and conservation lands. Where possible public access should be developed or upgraded to accommodate the young, the elderly and the physically disabled. Access should be clearly marked with signage and include suitable parking where appropriate. Some ideas of appropriate public access points are illustrated by single ended solid arrows on the Action Plan map in Figure 9-1.

The Conservation Commission should look to expand existing holdings. Coupled with enlarging open space areas, educational programs should be incorporated into the school system as well as

through public interest lectures or walks. The expansions should help to link other protected resource conservation or recreation areas owned by Hanover, other towns and Plymouth County. A plan for the Bay Area Circuit will eventually line Pembroke to the circuit. A Hanover connection could be made at Luddam's Ford; however, the entire connection would be on land within Pembroke. The Hanover Open Space Committee should appoint a liaison to the Pembroke Open Space Committee to assist wherever possible in promoting this linkage.